

The Parable Of The Dishonest Steward

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[0:00] Some of you are probably aware of maybe more than one, maybe quite a few get rich quick schemes.

! If you follow any social media or anything like that you'll see them pop up in your feed. Ways that you can make money, maybe some more quickly than others, some more honestly than others.

Frequent gambling app, there you go, that's a quick rich scheme as well. Some of you maybe perhaps are just interested in climbing the ladder of success.

Maybe it's not a scheme that you're interested in, but you do want to succeed in whatever business or endeavor that you have. You want to achieve financial freedom.

The problem might be though that what if you climb that ladder of success only to find out that you're leaning the ladder against the wrong wall.

[1:08] And you're ending up at a place that perhaps you don't necessarily want to really go to. And what if at the end of your life you maybe have some wealth to your name, but you find out in reality that you're poor?

Today's parable broaches this subject, the parable of the dishonest steward or the dishonest manager. He certainly comes to find out a problem in this area in his life.

And this is another one of the tough parables that Jesus taught that we have some trouble with interpreting in terms of, all right, what does this mean for us?

How do we apply this to our lives? And so as a way to focus our attention on what Jesus is after, I want to go first to the last verse of the parable.

And as we then look at that verse, it hopefully will then remind us as we make our way through what this parable really is about.

[2:14] And so here it is, Luke 16, verse 13, where Jesus teaches, It's a pretty simple concept that Jesus teaches that you can't have more than one master because if there are two masters, you're going to have competing interests in your life.

And in reality, you're just going to end up with one anyway. You're going to obey the one and not the other. You're going to follow after the one and not follow after the other.

So that is the important thing here. And then he closes this with this final statement here. You cannot serve God and money.

So these are the two masters that he is referring to in this parable. God is one master, money, or even more specifically, this from the New King James Version, the word mammon, which is often translated either as money or as wealth.

The word mammon itself, you have this on your notes, has an interesting origin. It can just generally mean money, but it can also go a little bit deeper as well.

[3:35] It's the idea not just of money, but what our confidence is in. So it has a little bit more nuance to it than just the idea of something you have in your wallet or your bank account.

It is something that I'm putting confidence in. And it goes beyond that in the sense that it is wealth personified. In other words, mammon has some human qualities to it.

And it comes from, you see on your notes here, Chaldean origin. Chaldean is interesting in the sense that it's Babylonian.

Babylonian, the ancient Chaldeans. Nebuchadnezzar, the famous king of Babylon, was a Chaldean. Actually, if you go back into your Old Testament history, into the book of Genesis, you also find out that Abraham, whom God called to become the first of this great nation of Israel, actually his roots are also Chaldean.

That's where he was living when God called him to follow after him, to go to a place that I will show you. And Abraham obeyed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness, because he believed what God said he was going to do.

[4:57] He trusted God in that way. And so this Chaldean, this Babylonian, this pagan mindset towards money, where money is something that is more than just something you have in your pocket.

It's something that I can put my trust in. It's something that I can even, in a sense, bow down to. Now, we're living in the United States a couple thousand years after Christ came and died and rose again from the dead.

And so for us, the idea of bowing down to money doesn't make much sense. But in reality, we can still be caught up in the idolatry of the worship of our means, our wealth, our money.

Even if we don't have much, or we might even consider ourselves as poor people, we would say that can still be an issue. You don't have to have it in order to want it in a way that shows that I'm worshipping.

I'm making an idol out of my money or what I want to have. So before we actually even get into the parable, you have on your notes here, I want to talk about a little bit, up to this point, a summary of what Jesus taught about material possessions.

[6:13] Because Jesus teaches us a lot about money, about material possessions. And so I want to kind of go over that before we jump into this parable. And the first thing that we learn, you can't read the Gospels and not understand this, that Jesus turned the way that we should view money upside down.

The way that the world views money is upside down from the way that God tells us how we ought to view money. And so we need to be aware of that and understand what it is that Jesus is teaching us about our finances, about our wealth.

Being a genuine follower of Christ will dramatically change the way that we think and the way that we behave in regard to material possessions. We ought to behave differently in the world that we live in as believers, right?

And that also includes the way that we look at, the way that we handle our finances. So that's a part of that as well. And that's from the way that we acquire it, to the way that we spend it, to the way that we save it, and to the way that we give it away, that Jesus teaches us is that how we view these activities around money ought to be different now that we are followers of Christ.

The third thing here that Jesus teaches us is that when we follow Christ, we come to realize that money cannot get us the things that are truly important. We come to realize that the things of this life, the material things of this life, things that money can buy in this life, are not really important when it comes to eternity.

[7:58] And eternity is what matters to us or it's what should matter to us, the eternal things, the things that will last forever. And money can't get that for us.

But we also understand that Jesus can, that through our relationship with Christ, we can acquire things that have an eternal value.

We can come to possess things that have an eternal value that will be something that can be enjoyed in all of eternity.

And so we learn as believers that we cease to trust in money. This is a tough thing. It's why Jesus taught about this subject so much is because we come to trust in money.

The things that money can provide. The sense of security that we can have through finances. The sense of where is our heart at?

[8:56] What does our heart desire? Money can be a revealing factor in terms of where our heart is in terms of that. And so Christians learn not to trust in money, but instead we place our trust in God.

That's key. And then we also cease to serve money. Instead, we willingly and gladly serve God. And then finally, money and material things we learn as believers are temporary.

They don't last. They don't last. But we can use money now to produce those things which will last. So even though money cannot get us things that in this life that we can hold on to and take with us through all of eternity, we can use worldly wealth to gain eternal things, things that matter for

eternity.

[10:16] We can use money as a tool to acquire eternal things. And that's what this parable is going to teach us and that we need to pay attention to.

Now, one more thing that I want to show you before we get to the parable itself is how the Pharisees responded to this parable. We're going to see in verse 1 of this parable that Jesus is teaching this parable to his disciples specifically.

So for us, we need to pay attention because that's meant he's teaching it for us as well. But the Pharisees, the crowd is there too, and the Pharisees are listening in, and they're responding to this as well.

And verse 14 tells us that the Pharisees were lovers of money. So how they responded to this parable speaks to where their heart was in all of this.

These, the supposed religious leaders or spiritual leaders of the nation of Israel, they had a heart problem, and their heart problem was they loved money.

[11:25] They loved money. Have you ever seen anybody who was caught up with religion but also were lovers of money? You just have to turn the TV on and see a few of them on your TV set or coming across your social feed.

ministries and preachers and religious outfits that seemingly love money and want to, almost in a sense we talked about get rich quick schemes, use those kinds of tactics and put some religious clothing on it to make it look good.

And that's kind of what the Pharisees were up to. So let's go ahead and get into this parable. Hold on, before, one more thing. They heard all of these things, all of what Jesus is about to teach here that we're going to see, and they derided him.

They didn't like it. They didn't like what Jesus was teaching about money because they loved it. So question for us then, how are we going to view the teaching of Jesus here?

Good question for us. So verse 1, chapter 16, verse 1, large crowd there, but he's speaking specifically. He's teaching the disciples. He says to them, there was a rich man who had a manager.

[12:47] The word here is also translated in different translations as steward. The steward or the manager, the Greek word here, our English word economy comes from it.

This is the servant in the household who was given charge basically of the household, of the company, of the farm, of the ranch, whatever the business was.

This manager, this steward was kind of put in charge of it, including the financial aspects of the house. And so this one, this is a person who was to be trusted.

This is a person who took seriously his responsibility to carry out the duties of a steward. And we're going to know also as well that you and I are also called stewards in the New Testament of all that God has given us.

In other words, as believers, we don't have an ownership mindset over the things that we have. We have a stewardship mindset, understanding that when this life is over, all that God has given us in terms of material possessions, material wealth, is not something that we will take with us.

[14:00] We will leave that behind. And then we will be judged based on how well we managed or how well we stewarded all that God had given us. And so here's this story about this rich man, this owner, this master of a household, master of a business, who had a manager, who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.

So there was a whistleblower. Somewhere in the company, somewhere in the house, there's a whistleblower. And they're saying, they go to the owner of the company and they say, hey, the guy that you have in charge of all of your possessions, of all of your stuff, of all of your business, the guy that you have entrusted to that, who is meant to be a steward and meant to be trustworthy, is not so much because he's wasting all of your possessions.

He's taking advantage of you. He is, we would call it embezzling. We would call it skimming off the top. He is doing things to pay for himself, using company funds for extravagant travel or limousines or whatever it was.

He's doing things with company funds to benefit himself and keeping some of it for himself as well. And he's now been busted. Okay?

So this is the scenario. So the owner, the master of the house, called him and said to the steward here, what is it that I hear about you?

[15:43] Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager. You're done. In other words, we're not having a discussion here about whether you're going to be fired or not. You're done.

The only thing that you have left to do is to gather the paperwork that you have and turn it in, and we're going to go over it with a fine-tooth comb and find out exactly what's been going on, and you're done here.

So he's got some time left, not to kind of take care of himself, but he's got some time just to make sure he's got his ducks in a row so that when he presents it to the boss, he's not going to be able to make a case to keep his job.

He's just trying to maybe perhaps keep from going to jail. We don't really know that in the parable. We don't have that information. But this is it. This is get your affairs in order.

We're going to go over it. Your time is done. Verse 3. And the manager said to himself, so the steward, this dishonest man, what shall I do since my master is taking the management or the stewardship away from me?

[16:52] I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg. So he's trying to figure, okay, I don't have a mind, a body for hard labor here. I'm not going to go out and dig ditches.

I don't want to go out and beg for money here. So what am I going to do? I know I'm busted. I'm guilty as charged. I know that. What can I do?

Is there anything that I can do to kind of help myself in this circumstance? And he says, aha, the idea here, I've decided what to do.

The idea of, aha, I get it. Like, I finally, I figured it out. So that when I am removed from management, people might receive me into their homes.

Now, that reads a little different to us. But understand that in their world, in their economy, when I went to work for someone, I didn't just go to work for them and I go home to my own house.

[17:50] That's not how it worked. When I agreed to engage in employment, if you will, I was agreeing to become this owner, this master's servant.

And he provided everything for me. My well-being, my housing, my food, everything was provided for me in that case. So when he's talking about being received into other people's homes, he's talking about his next job.

I want to, what can I do here that will help me out so that when I'm going out and I'm looking for my next gig, my next career move, my next job, people are going to welcome me into their homes so that I can do for them this kind of same work.

This is how this man is thinking. I've decided, okay, I've got it. I've got it figured out. Now this is what I'm going to do. So summoning his master's debtors one by one.

Now, in this parable, we're only told about two of them, but you can kind of think this through, that there's probably a list of debtors, people that they're doing business with on a regular basis.

[19:02] They're buying and selling. This is some sort of wholesale market that has to do with goods, with food and other goods, that kind of thing.

So probably farming is involved in this. And these are people who are buying in bulk and then selling and going from there. So this is all part of the equation here. Summoning his master's debtors one by one because he doesn't want to do this as a group project.

He wants to do this on the hush, on the down low. He wants to make sure that, you know, because he's got to have cooperation on both ends here. And he said to the first one, how much do you owe my master?

So he's going out. He's taking the books and he's going out into the town and he's finding the people who owe his master money. And he's going to, in a sense, cook the books for him.

And he said, 100 measures of oil. The first client that he comes to, he is in debt to the master, to the owner, 100 measures of oil.

[20:07] And he said to him, take your bill and sit down quickly and write 50. So cut it in half what it shows that you owe to my master.

So the guy on the other end also has to be complicit in this fraud, in this corruption. And so the both of them, they have in their mindset how to get ahead financially in this world in a very dishonest way.

So he goes to the guy, tell me, how much do you owe? I owe 100. We'll cut it in half. Only say that you owe 50. And they both market on their accounts so that when they're both looked at, yeah, they match up.

Okay, he only owes 50. It's all squared away. It's all good. Oh, that's good. So the next guy said to another, how much do you owe? And he said, 100 measures of wheat.

And he said to him, take your bill and write 80. Now, I don't know why he's telling one guy 50 and one guy 80. I don't know. It might just be that he's trying to mix it up so that the owner doesn't suspect that there's something fishy going on.

[21:20] And so he's, you know, and still, this is a lot of money. When you're talking about, we're talking about several years' wages that are being skimmed, if you will.

And this guy is not doing it for his, he's not getting any money. All he is now working for is favor. So that when he's put out on his rear end here in the next day or two, there's going to be people out there who said, well, I owe that guy.

I owe this guy because he did me a solid. And he saved me a bunch of money. So I'm going to, and I kind of wonder, am I going to hire this guy? Even though I'm swindling with him, am I going to hire a fellow swindler to do the same kind of work that he was doing?

This is how sometimes they think. And Jesus is telling this parable here based on this story. Does these kinds of things happen?

Absolutely. Now, here's what's interesting. And this is the end of the parable, first part of verse 8. First part of verse 8.

[22:33] The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. The end.

What? You mean the owner, the master wasn't like ticked off? He wasn't like, let me call 911 here. I've been robbed. I've been, he didn't, he knew it happened. And when he's sitting there looking at the books, he's like, whoa, whoa.

I know they owe me more money than this. But somehow, oh, that guy, he's so shrewd. Well, good for him. What does that tell us about the owner?

That he's also interested in wealth of this world. That he's not righteous himself. Here he is being complimentary over somebody who's pulled one over on him.

[23:36] He's saying it's admirable what you've done here. And in a sense, perhaps he's happy in that he's getting anything.

You know, even if it is half on the dollar or whatever it is. Because the dishonest manager could have written him into nothing. And he's going to get something now, at least something.

And he's going to rejoice in that. And he's going to say, well, he grinned. This guy pulled one over on me.

And wow, what a shrewd guy. I wish I could be a shrewd. Kind of the thinking that you have here. And so then, why is Jesus telling us this parable?

Now, from here going forward, the second half of verse 8 into verse 13 is Jesus' explanation now. His commentary over this parable.

[24:41] What this parable then means for you and me. How we ought to apply this parable to our lives. And so he says this, that the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

He starts off the explanation with the word for. That's kind of the indication that lets you know, okay, story is over. Here comes the application. Okay? The owner is commending this dishonest steward for what he's done.

The end. Now, here's the lesson. Four. The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

Now, what I want you to understand here, and this is where sometimes we can get into trouble with understanding a parable like this. Because some people want to put God in the place of the owner.

And that's a misunderstanding here. Jesus is putting both the dishonest steward and the owner of the company in the category of the sons of this world.

[25:52] They're both sons of this world. God is in no way saying, I commend you for being so shrewd. That is not the voice of God from the owner.

That is not how are we to understand this parable. It is not God who's saying, oh, this guy was so shrewd. Isn't that neat? That's not God saying that.

They're both the sons of this world. They're both shrewd in that way in dealing with their generation. And they're more shrewd than the sons of light.

The sons of light would be those who are his disciples, those who are followers of Christ, those who have committed themselves to trusting Christ as Savior and living for him. Those people are sons of light.

Now, Jesus is going to go on and commend what is important. He's going to tell us what he commends, what he says is important. Now, I tell you, and this is for enforcement.

[26:56] I'm telling you, I alone am telling you this is the idea here. Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

And read that the first time and you're like, what? What is Jesus talking about here? What was the dishonest steward doing?

He was using dishonest gain, corrupt, fraudulent gain to make himself friends. Friends who would welcome them into their dwelling, into their home, as a servant, as a steward over their possessions.

And Jesus is saying the only way that this relates to us and the command that's given to us is to make friends for yourself by means of unrighteous wealth, worldly wealth, so that when it fails and worldly wealth will fail, if you're using your worldly wealth for the sake of basically spreading the gospel, then those friends that are waiting for you in eternity will be there to welcome you home. Okay? That's basically what he's... And it's an awkward way to say that, but that's what's in view here. The idea that we're going to take what God has given us, and God uses...

[28:30] He allows us to gain worldly wealth, does he not? We gain it, we save it, we spend it, we give it, we give it away, we're generous with it, we save it up for retirement, we do all these things with worldly wealth.

Jesus is saying make sure that when you're doing these things, that at least a part of what you're doing is giving it away in such a way that it's going to gain more friends for you in heaven when you arrive, and you'll have a bigger welcoming committee on the day that you arrive in heaven.

That's basically what's in view here. He goes on, and he commends to them this, One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much.

And one who is dishonest in a very little is going to be dishonest in much as well. So Jesus is now... He's not talking about shrewdness when he's talking about the sons of light.

He's talking about faithfulness. Faithfulness is what matters when it comes to the way that we handle worldly wealth. Not so much shrewdness, but faithfulness.

[29:47] Am I being faithful as a steward of all that God has given me? And am I doing any investing beyond this world? Am I doing any investing in eternal things, things that matter for eternity?

People witnessing for the gospel. Am I supporting missions? Am I doing things? Am I investing myself, my resources, my time, my energy, my finances, in ways that I can reach people for Christ, if me not directly, then supporting those who are doing that work, so that I'm investing in eternal things?

Or am I going to show up in heaven empty-handed? No welcoming committee, as it were. No one there to greet me.

He goes on, verse 11, If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, worldly wealth, who will entrust you with the true riches?

The true riches are the eternal riches. Rewards in heaven that you receive for your faithfulness here on earth, for how you handled what God gave you here on this earth.

[31:14] Verse 12, And if you've not been faithful with that which is another's, which is the definition of stewardship, It's not your own, but someone has given it to you to steward it, to invest it, to put it to work.

Are you faithful in what God has given you to put to work? Are you faithful in that? Remember, you don't own anything. Instead, you yourself are owned by God.

You've been bought with a price. You are not your own. Then, Jesus shed his blood and purchased you at the cross. And so you belong to him. So everything that you have now as a believer, we understand that it doesn't belong to me anymore.

Everything that I have, everything about me, my family, my house, my possessions, everything about me doesn't belong to me. I'm not the owner of any of it. I'm simply a steward. It's mine for now.

Now, he's given charge over it to me for now in a temporary way. And am I going to be faithful what he has given me?

[32:26] And in that way, then be rewarded in the life that is to come. And again, he concludes this by saying, new servant can serve two masters.

For either you will hate the one, love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. God and mammon.

So when we look at this, there are on your notes here now, some lessons that we can learn from a crooked manager or the parable of this crooked, unrighteous manager-steward, principles for us to be better stewards, to make us better stewards.

And the first thing is that we need to remember that Jesus commended faithfulness, not so much or more so than shrewdness. Now, shrewdness can be a positive or a negative.

The word for shrewd or crafty here or wise can be interpreted as wise or prudent. It's not good or evil in and of itself.

[33:38] Shrewdness is what you do with it. You can be wise or shrewd for good or for evil. In the parable, both the manager and the owner were shrewd for evil, for their own purposes, for their own gain.

They were dishonest with it. They were corrupt in the way that they were shrewd. Everything that happened, they put through a filter that says, okay, how can I work this for my advantage?

How can I take advantage of this for my benefit? It was all about themselves. And so if Jesus wants us to be shrewd, it's only in the sense not to say, hey, you know, go skim off the books and then come give it to the building fund.

That's not what Jesus is saying here, okay? And we would do that, right? You know, if that's what we were doing. But that's not what's in view here.

What is in view is that we be faithful with what he gives us. And then in the sense that we be shrewd, it's in the sense of, how can I do my best to reach people for Christ?

[34:48] How can I think in eternal ways when it comes to sharing the gospel with people, with investing finances in things that matter for eternity, not just in stuff that's fun for me or secure for me?

Because my security is in Christ. It's not in what's in my bank account, okay? And we have to, all right, how do we balance that?

Because there is a sense of, yes, we need to be wise with our finances. We need to save for the future. That's a biblical principle. And yet at the same time, he calls us to be generous.

And he challenges us not to trust in worldly wealth, but to trust in him. And so how do we balance that? And I can't answer that for you, and you can't answer that for me.

It's something that you have to work out in your relationship with the Lord. How do you deal with that? How do you balance that? How do you express generosity without being so frivolous that on the day that you retire, you find yourself out on the street because you haven't invested anything?

[35:56] And so how do you do that? And so you have to figure that out. So Jesus commends here, more importantly, faithfulness. Am I faithful in all that he's given me?

Am I faithful in the way that I handle my finances, in the way that I handle my bills, in the way that I, first of all, earn a living? Am I faithful in the way that I earn it, that I acquire it?

Am I honest in the workplace? Am I taking advantage of customers? Am I, you know, what am I doing in the workplace to earn it? Am I, is there faithfulness, is there honesty expressed in that way?

In the way that I spend it? Is it just all for self? Is it just for me, myself, and I, or me, myself, and my family, and that's it? Am I saving it?

That's also a question that we need to ask. Am I faithful in that way, or do I just blow it? Am I in debt in such a way that it's dictating to me, my finances are dictating to me?

[37:06] Finances, worldly wealth, are a great tool. Again, like shrewdness, it can be positive or negative, but it depends. Because money makes a lousy God.

Because if you become indebted to it, and it's controlling the way that you make decisions, and here I see a situation where I have an opportunity to be generous, but I can't, or God wants me to give to the local church, or he wants me to give to this ministry, or whatever it is, but I can't because of my debt, then who's in charge?

Who's calling the shots? What's happening in that way? The same thing with how we plan to give it away.

Jesus used this parable as well to characterize the way that the world works in contrast to the way his disciples operate. Remember he talked about the sons of this world, and then the sons of light. And he's saying there's two different groups of people here. And in the parable, both of the characters in the parable are the sons of this world. Don't be like them. Be like the sons of light.

[38:34] Be faithful in the way that you handle your finances. So it's not that the owner represents God and the steward represents us.

That's not the point of the parable. The point of the parable is that here's how the world operates. Here's how believers, people who follow Christ, operate.

It's one contrasted against the other. And then, number three, guard yourself here. Our sense of urgency.

And in this parable, there is most definitely a sense of urgency here, right? Because this dishonest manager, he's got a day or two to figure stuff out before he's kicked out on his hinder parts and is out in the street, right?

He knows. He's got a short period of time. As believers, there is a sense where we kind of have that same mindset.

[39:42] We know that this life is temporary. We know that this life doesn't last forever. There ought to be a sense of urgency with how we handle our finances, how we view our finances.

So our sense of urgency should not be for the sake of worldly currency, but for the sake of eternity. For the sake of eternal things. That's where our urgency should lie.

It's for the sake of eternal things. When he says unrighteous wealth here in verse 9, I tell you, make friends for yourself by means of unrighteous wealth.

The unrighteous wealth there is just another way of saying the currency of the world, the currency of earth. And we all operate in that currency.

We do. We go to work. We earn the currency of the world. We buy things with the currency of the world. We save up and get a house and vehicles and pay our bills with the currency of earth.

[40:47] Even in the church, we accept the currency of the earth as offerings, and we use the currency of earth to pay the electric bills and to pay salaries and all of this kind of stuff.

Every day, we operate. All of us, believers or unbelievers, we operate in the currency of the world. But what he's saying is, how are you using it?

Are you using it in such a way as just to benefit yourself? Are you faithful or unfaithful? Are you honest or dishonest?

Are you corrupt or are you not corrupt in the way that you handle worldly wealth, the finances that God allows you to have, to manage, to be a steward of?

And so we're called to be faithful in that way. And so our urgency ought to shift as believers.

[41:48] We ought to have a more eternal mindset. And that's something that happens as we grow in our relationship with Christ. Listen, the moment that you trust Christ as Lord and Savior doesn't mean that your

views of money and how you handle money is all of a sudden just going to be changed overnight.

No. Your mind needs to be transformed. Your life needs to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, Romans 12, 2. That as you grow in your relationship with Christ and as you immerse yourself into the Word of God, the Word of God is going to get in you and give you an understanding of the things that really matter, the things that are really important in this world.

And the more that you mature in your relationship with Christ, you come to realize that the things of this world just don't have value like they used to.

And the things that do matter to you are the things that are of an eternal nature. Now let me ask you a question. If you look around this room, or if you were sitting in your house and you were looking around your house or your yard, and you're looking around, and I were to ask you a question of everything that you see here, what has eternal value in all the things that you see here?

Really, the only answer to that question is people. It's people. None of the rest of it goes into eternity with us.

[43:27] But people can. People do what people can. That's where our investments need to be. That's what's eternal. People are eternal.

And people will either spend eternity in heaven with the Lord or apart from him in hell. And God, for whatever reason, has called us to be a part of that equation.

He wants to use us to spread the gospel so that people can hear the truth and know the truth and know that Jesus Christ has died for them and rose again from the dead and that they too can have eternal life by trusting in Christ.

And he's given us this responsibility as stewards. We're stewards of that message. So what are we doing with our finances that he gives us, not that we're owners of and, you know, it's all mine.

And again, God gives us all things richly to enjoy. I'm not up here saying that you need to spend all your money and send it away to missions. That's not what I'm saying. Because all that we have, he's given to us to enjoy.

[44:53] I'm just saying a part of our enjoyment is investing in people who will come to faith in Jesus Christ. Man, that's the greatest source of joy.

And as you mature in your walk with the Lord, you come to realize that the stuff of this world just keeps losing its value, losing its importance, losing its luster.

And when we see someone who crosses that line of faith and puts their trust in Christ to save them, that becomes like the most important thing in the world to you.

Because you know that that's eternal. It matters. Man. And that's all that Jesus is saying here.

So four more quick things here. Be strategic with the opportunities that you have. If shrewdness has any role to play, it's in this way.

[45:54] That we need to be strategic in terms of where our money is being invested, in the conversations that we need to have, in the way that we're demonstrating our faith to those around us who don't know Christ.

We need to be strategic in all of those things. Now, if you want to put the word shrewd there, that's fine. But for most of us, I know for me, when I think of the word shrewd, I think of it in a negative context.

You know? Be shrewd in the way that I witness. I struggle with that. But it's a neutral word. So just change the word. Make it strategic. Be wise.

Be wise. In the way that we speak to people. The way that we carry ourselves in the world. Always remembering that people are watching.

People are learning from us. People are checking us out. Because, hey, that guy says he's a Christian. She says she follows the Lord.

[46:58] I want to see that in the way that she lives. I want to see that in the words that she uses. How she responds to adversity. How he responds when things don't go well at work.

What's that going to look like? All of these things are a part of it. It's not just shoveling your money to some mission agency or to some missionary overseas.

And the way that you live is garbage. Because you're hot-headed. Or because your language, you use foul language. And you're just not representing Christ in a way that makes people sit up and

say, Oh, well, that person, he's serious.

She's serious about her relationship with the Lord. You can tell by the way that she lives. How she carries herself. How he speaks. How he treats his family. How she treats her kids.

It's all a part of it. It's all a part of it. Because we want to be able to have people on that welcoming committee. And say, Welcome.

[48:05] The reason I'm here. Can you imagine? You get to heaven. And you see Jesus. And you see your family members. And then all of a sudden you see some stranger come up to you.

And, Rich, you don't know me. But it's because of something that you did or some money that you gave that I'm here. And I just came to say thank you.

For what you've done. For your faithfulness. I mean, talk about pretty stinking cool how that would be on that day.

So be strategic. Be intentional with the money that you have. Again, viewing money, the currency of this world, is a tool.

And I can use it to gain eternal value. But if I don't, if instead money becomes my master, my God.

[49:06] Not because I say it. I don't know of anybody who's going to say, Well, yeah, I worship my money. Nobody says that. But the way they view it, the way that they handle it, maybe says differently.

Is money in charge of my life? And if money is in charge of your life, then is it not your God?

Is it not your master? And money makes a terrible master. Terrible. So be intentional with that.

Be faithful. No matter how much you have. Because you don't have to have a lot to be faithful with it. Jesus said that. If you're... Whoever is faithful in very little, you might say, Well, what I have is very little.

Jesus says, Be faithful in that. And you'll be entrusted with much more later on. Be faithful with what he gives you.

[50:12] You see that in Christian circles. People that sometimes will justify a lack of generosity because they're saying, Well, I don't have much. So I have to hoard it.

Everything I have, I have to keep for myself. And the Lord says, No. No. And I'm not talking about you giving to the church. I'm talking about when you see a need. Someone's in need and they need help.

And I'm going to turn a blind eye to that because, Well, I only have so little. There's nothing I couldn't help in any serious way. Yes, you can. Yes, you can.

Just got to be creative. Just got to think maybe outside of the box. Maybe shrewd. Prudent. Wise. Be strategic.

In the way that God wants you to be generous. And then finally, be honest about the dreams that you have.

[51:14] Oh. And I think this is for all of us. It's for me. And when I preach these things, I'm preaching to myself as much as I'm preaching to anybody else.

Boy. What are my dreams for my finances? Because I can't serve two masters, can I?

So where's my heart? When my heart dreams of stuff that I can do with my money going forward, things that I'm saving up for, and that's where my heart is.

Any room in there for eternal things? Or is it all just me? Things that I want to acquire. Things that I want to do.

Places that I want to be. Is that a part of it? And be honest. Are there times in my life where my view of money and what money can get me in this life overtakes my faithfulness to God?

[52:33] And what I dream about, what you dream about, will kind of give you an indication of where your heart is. That's a sobering thought for all of us.

It's a sobering thought for me. And that's the challenge that we have. That's the challenge of this parable. And that's why money is such a crucial issue.

And it's why Jesus over and over in the Gospels talks about our view of money. How we handle it. How we look at it. So let's honor the Lord.

Be faithful to him. Faithful stewards of all that he gives us. Not dishonest like this guy. The guy in this parable. He's the example of what not to be.

So let's be faithful instead. Lord, thank you so much. How your word can challenge us in ways that we might not expect.

[53:41] We can come to church and think, oh, this is going to be good. And then we hear a message about something that's near and dear and we struggle with.

And I think, Lord, that all of us in some respects or another have to admit this is a challenging area for us.

And it will be something that challenges us until we go home, until we see you face to face. There is so much distraction in this world.

There are so many good things in this world. And we recognize that all that we have comes from you.

That you are our loving Heavenly Father and you love to give your children good gifts. And I pray, Lord, that we would, as we grow in our relationship with you, learn to adjust what we consider as a good gift.

[54:51] A valuable gift. May our heart and may our attention be drawn to things that matter for eternity.

Lord, help us to have eyes to see with eternal value.

Have a heart that is drawn to eternity. And, Lord, yes, we do need to save.

We need to be wise with the way that we handle our finances. And we do need to enjoy the blessings that you give us. What would it say about us if we were ungrateful for the things in this world that you have given us to enjoy?

Let us, Lord, not be a complaining lot. But, Lord, that we would have a heart for eternity.

[56:12] That's what we're asking for. Draw our hearts towards you. Towards eternity. Help us to see that that's where real value is.

That that's where real importance is. Lord, we love you.

Lord, I pray that we would serve only the one master, only the one Lord. For, indeed, it is impossible to serve both.

So let us repent of those times where we put our trust in money, in wealth, in the security of it.

When we serve it. Because it has become our master. And, Lord, let us seek after you and be wise in the way that we handle it.

[57:21] And, Lord, we love you. We praise you. And we ask you this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.